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SUBJECT: CANDIDATES EYE POSSIBLE DEALS BEFORE DEADLINE

REF: KABUL 994

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Six days into the two-week registration period for the presidential election, no candidate among the more than 60 names considering a run has filed his or her completed paperwork. Behind-the-scenes efforts to consolidate campaigns among the leading candidates are in full swing. At the heart of these negotiations are Cabinet positions and vice presidential slots, the latter of which presidential candidates need to lock in during the registration phase and cannot swap out during the campaign or between the first and second rounds of voting (reftel). With more than a dozen leading politicians caught up in the presidential and vice presidential sweepstakes and no names yet officially on the ballot, the campaigns are engaging in a serious game of political chicken, waiting for other camps to blink first and commit to a ticket. End Summary.

Front Runners, Dark Horses Alike Still Not On Ballot

¶2. (SBU) President Karzai formally announced his intention to run on April 27, though he did not disclose his running mates. Karzai leaves for Washington on May 4 and may not return until after the May 8 registration deadline, so he must register in the next few days. United Front candidate Abdullah Abdullah earlier hinted he would register early in the registration period, but his campaign manager admitted to PolOff that the campaign had yet to finalize its vice presidential choices. Another UF source said the opposition coalition has offered its vice presidential slots to two candidates, who have yet to accept. At least one of them (probably Hazara leader Haji Mohammed Mohaqqueq) is in serious negotiations with another campaign. Earlier, Pashtun royalist Mustapha Zahir told UF leaders he was not interested in running on the ticket. More than six other names are still in the running as backups if the UF's top two choices for VPs bow out. Former Interior Minister Ali Amhad Jalali told the Charge April 29 that the leading opposition candidates had not made any progress in uniting to merge their campaigns.

¶3. (SBU) At least 10 of the roughly 60 names mentioned as possible presidential candidates have dual citizenship, with at least seven of those holding U.S. citizenship (this ranges from serious candidates like Ashraf Ghani to more obscure personalities we believe to still be residing in the US). Several more rumored vice presidential candidates hold foreign citizenship as well. To date, only one AmCit) a possible candidate we hadn't heard of before) has approached the Embassy's consular section about renouncing his citizenship. After considering his options, he decided not to renounce.

Thinking Twice About Losing Citizenship

¶4. (SBU) The loss of citizenship appears to be making some candidates think twice before committing themselves to a campaign. Some, including Ghani, have downplayed their

foreign citizenship in recent weeks and have been vague on whether they intend to comply with the constitutional requirement to renounce non-Afghan citizenship. Independent Election Commission (IEC) officials have stated repeatedly that they often` Qo trcd`A-j'~`e|u\$tw^EGJt25. (SBU) We expect most candidates to wait until the final days of the registration period to commit their campaigns for the long-haul, though foreign travel plans will compel some, like Karzai, to move sooner. Once top campaigns have registered their tickets, others may quickly follow. However, far fewer than the current 60 names are likely to wind up on the ballot. Some minor candidates will fall short of the 10,000 voters' signatures needed to register and others will opt not to renounce their dual citizenship. Some more serious candidates will fail to attract viable running mates and will decide to end their runs without ever registering as the leading campaigns grab the most sought-after vice presidential choices and lock in post-election power-sharing deals.

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